

Claim 9 (Currently amended): The method according to claim 3, A method for the storage of an acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide, which, in a forced coloration test, the values, ΔL , Δa , Δb , are calculated in accordance with the following formulas:

$$\Delta L = |L_1 - L_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}$$

$$\Delta a = |a_1 - a_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}$$

$$\Delta b = |b_1 - b_2| \text{ (Absolute value)}$$

wherein L₁, a₁, and b₁ are respectively the values of L, a, and b of said acrylonitrile solution before undergoing said forced coloration test and L₂, a₂, and b₂, are respectively the values of L, a, and b of said acrylonitrile solution after undergoing said forced coloration test and are respectively 5 or less, 5 or less and 10 or less, wherein a molecular oxygen concentration of the gaseous phase portion of said solution is adjusted to a level in the range of 0.01 to 10% by volume preparatorily to storing said solution [as held] in contact with a metal, wherein the acrylonitrile solution has a water content of not more than 0.3% by weight in the presence of at least one member selected from alkyl-substituted hydroxybenzenes, hindered phenols, phosphorous esters, phosphoric esters, and phosphoric acid amides.

Claim 10 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 8, which comprises the steps of:

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preparing ^{the} a maleimide mixture by adding the primary antioxidant and the secondary antioxidant ^{the} A maleimide in a molten state and, subsequently dissolving said maleimide containing mixture in acrylonitrile.

Claim 11 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 8, comprising:
adding a primary antioxidant and a secondary antioxidant to acrylonitrile and, dissolving molten maleimide therein.

Claim 12 (Currently amended): The method according to claim 3, 2 wherein a total amount of azobenzene and N,N-diphenyl hydrazine is not more than 500 ppm.

Claim 13 (Previously presented): The method according to claim 3, wherein the concentration of N-phenyl maleimide in acrylonitrile is between 40 to 90% by weight relative to that of the acrylonitrile solution of N-phenyl maleimide.